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"Truth Is One, Men Call It By Various Names." —RIG VEDA

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AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

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PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*
"Light shall come again from the East."

VOL. XXXIX 1950 NUMBER 1

A CHARM FOR THE LAND

English Verse of Great Antiquity

Erce,* Erce, Erce, Mother of Earth,
May the Almighty, Lord Everlasting,
Grant thee fields, green and fertile,
Grant thee fields, fruitful and growing,
Hosts of spear-shafts, shining harvests,
    Harvest of Barley, the broad,
    Harvest of Wheat, the white,
All the heaping harvests of earth!
May the Almighty, Lord Everlasting,
And His holy saints in heaven above,
From fiend and foe defend this land,
Keep it from blight and coming of harm,
From spell of witches, wickedly spread!

Now I pray the Almighty who made this world,
That malice of man, or mouth of woman
Never may eaken the words I have spoken.
Hail to thee, Earth, Mother of men!
Grow and be great in God's embrace,
Filled with fruit for the food of men!

*Name of an ancient goddess of fertility.

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UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

Just as by the conquest of the elements comes glorified body, so from the conquest of the mind will come glorified mind. —*Swami Vivekananda.*

To discover the good in all things is the pefect wisdom; to love the good in all things is the perfect emotion, and to serve the good in all things is the perfect work.

—*Gautama Buddha.*

Light that makes some things seen, makes some things invisible. Were it not for darkness and the shadow of the earth, the noblest part of the Creation would remain unseen, and the stars in heaven invisible.

—*Sir Thomas Browne (adapted).*

To conquer oneself, to curb anger, to spare the vanquished, to raise the fallen enemy—a man who does this I shall not compare with the greatest of men, but will deem as most like to a god. —*Cicero.*

Among all things that men have forgotten, the one that is the most forgotten is that they are living on a star.

—*G. K. Chesterton.*

Even the most unfriendly criticism may be a help if you take it right. —*George Washington Carver.*

Gentleness brings victory to him who attacks, and safety to him wro defends. Those whom Heaven would save, it fences round with gentleness. —*Lao-tze.*

In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death. —*Proverbs.*

Immortality is the consciousness of the Divine in man.

—*F. Max Müller.*

KINGDOM OF REALIZATION

By Swami Paramananda

(Compiled from two Addresses given by the Swami at the Vedanta Centre, Boston.)

In spiritual life our greatest satisfaction comes through surrender. That is, through accepting with unquestioning mind all things as from a Divine Hand. Yet, however great the satisfaction may be, and however much we may try to cling theoretically to this ideal, its actual practice is very, very difficult. Our own nature makes it so—our frailties and weaknesses—but it is not impossible. There are people among the varying religions, in all parts of the world, who not only have believed in its practicability, but have proved it by their lives. These men and women have gone through uttermost pain, misery and deprivation without faltering or losing their inner poise and vision.

One thing is sure: if an ideal has power to sustain a man and keep him unshaken in the face of disgrace and death, it must be exceedingly potent. When all is going smoothly it is easy to say: "I surrender everything to God!"; but when misfortune strikes, we are not so willing to accept God's Will; we begin to doubt it and to exert our own. Yet we are told that the Will of God is all-in-all, and it does mean just that. It means that that Will is manifest not merely through the pleasant things, but through the whole of life, through whatever comes in whatever form; and only as we are able to perceive it in the difficult and painful, as well as in the more fortunate circumstances, do we know it at all.

It is a stupendous thing for us to grasp with the mind, and not in a moment can a man acquire that strength and reach that altitude. Before such vision can be attained we must seek to draw close to it. Dwelling upon it in

thought is most helpful, but far more helpful is the putting it into actual practice in our daily living.

All the great Bibles tell us that in every face we should see the face of the Divine, that we should refuse to see anything but Divinity. But how shall we do this? How shall we forgive our enemies and see God's Will working through them? How may we prepare ourselves for such universal insight?

First we should strive to perceive the Divine in the good and the beautiful, and then enlarge our vision to include the other side of the picture. When in anyone we feel that there is a lack of the higher manifestation, we must learn to forgive. In this way, gradually, we shall be able to see beneath the surface to the underlying unity, and the heart of humanity will be revealed to us. Such perception has nothing to do with personalities. In fact, we have to rise above personalities. If we limit our vision to forms of the phenomenal world, we shall see nothing but differences and cannot help but give ever greater reality to our likes and dislikes. Only when our feelings and aspirations flow in rhythm with the Will of God will our ideal become living.

What a wonderful purpose to carry in our consciousness! — a purpose that grows more wonderful as we begin to realize it in our life. There is no one who can realize it for us, no teacher, preacher, priest or minister; no Bible or no church. It is something that has to do directly with God and the Soul. Outer things may help, they may inspire us and sustain us in our weak moments; for this reason we cannot disregard them; but the direct approach lies in our relationship with our ideal.

That is why the life of devotion must be the practical life. It is not just a matter of form or the observance of

some ritual; we feel devotion and spontaneously we express it in action. We can only express as we feel, and when feeling and expression coincide with our highest aspiration, then the devotional life becomes more than a vague theory, it becomes the most immediate factor in our existence. Its aim and purpose is to make man definitely aware of the Presence of God in his heart. Devotional life begins where all theories end. It begins when there comes that feeling, "There must be a God; there *must* be! Everywhere we see creation, and where there is creation there must be a Creator." When this conviction arises, we drop all our clever arguments. We long for the thing itself, not merely to prove it intellectually. We want the loving Father (or the loving Mother) to come at our moment of need; we want His guidance; we want His protection; we want His love. We who feel such great love for our earthly parents should feel infinitely more for that One from Whom all love flows.

Thus it is that devotees, those who are really full of spiritual yearning, do not stop with theoretical ideas. They want the living Reality, and that is possible only when we invoke it with openness of heart.

Devotion cannot be expressed through speech. It is deeper than any words that can be uttered. It is the innermost feeling of the spirit of man and there is no prayer that can convey it, save that which we utter in silence. When we feel that Presence within us, there is no sense of distance; there is no need to speak aloud.

He, the Supreme, is called: "One Who Knows Man's Innermost Being." When we have learned to commune with Him, then we have truly gone beyond all doubt and despair; then the heart becomes so full of feeling that we have the sense of melting into the Eternal and the Infinite.

Profound truths such as these cannot grow old; nor can we grasp them merely through hearing or reading. We make them our own, as we unfold, through assimilation of their spirit. Spiritual teaching is wholly a matter of unfoldment. For instance, we read and read and then one day we suddenly perceive the relation between what we have read and our own existence. That is what unfoldment means. Again and again we are told that we have the Immortal Self within us, undying, undecaying, unalterable, mighty even in the conception; but no matter how mighty this conception may seem to us as we read the words, we can never realize its magnitude until its reality dawns in our heart, in our own soul.

There is great value in the repetition of thoughts and ideas, and that is something we must bear in mind. Learning means repeating a thing until it blends with our consciousness. Of course the object of learning is not mere repetition, but repetition is needful as a means to a greater end. An artist goes over the same sketch many times until he has expressed from within his dream and vision. The same way it is with spiritual ideals. Sometimes they seem strange, unfamiliar, but when we focus our mind upon them, their meaning is revealed and they grow clear to us.

This knowing directly constitutes the whole theme of all philosophies and religions. It goes beyond the realm of learning and is not concerned merely with filling the mind with words and theories.

In one of the great Upanishads the question is asked: "What is that by knowing which everything else becomes known?" In the verses that follow, the teacher shows that only by union with the Imperishable can man gain such limitless knowledge. Intellectual attainments cannot give it, nor even the study of the scriptures, because it

lies beyond the province of mind and self—beyond name and form. Therefore in order to reach it, we have to take another road and reverse the order of our approach. These thoughts and senses which are constantly rushing out into the world of objects, the phenomenal world, must be made to turn within. When this is accomplished, the mind becomes subjective and, little by little, we find within us Something subtle, immeasurable, silent and profound—Something we are unable to put into words, and which the sages refer to as being "beyond mind and speech."

Here someone may ask: "If wise men are unable to give voice to their wisdom, how are we to know that they are wise?"

The man of wisdom is known by the atmosphere he radiates, by the tone he takes. He is not one who merely talks and is all on the surface, nor does he lose his temper and become disturbed. His whole nature is transformed; he has transcended himself, not by finding another world, but by entering more deeply within his own world.

"Even here in this world (this world of perplexity)," says Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita, "relative existence is conquered by him whose mind rests in equality, for Brahman, the Unbounded Spirit, is ever the same and knows no imperfection."

What does it mean—to conquer relative existence? Who can do it? Certainly not one who lives on the sense plane and depends for his recreation, for his pleasure, even for his knowledge, on the outer things of life—he never can do it. He can never find the evenness that is needful.

Yet in the phenomenal world where all is diversity and seeming confusion, there is a subtle Principle, unchanging, unalterable, and this Principle we have within us. When we realize this, actually realize it, a new way opens before

us, leading to absolute freedom and peace. And so it says that even before one is separated from the body one may find Brahman, Truth, the One, and become like unto It; for "The knower of Brahman becomes like unto Brahman." A true knower, Sri Krishna tells us, looks with equal eye everywhere, upon the man endowed with learning and humility and the one who, from the worldly point of view, may be regarded as an outcast.

People are too apt to think that when anyone seems to be free of class feeling, he is either following a theory or is making some compromise. But he may be moved by a far higher motive. He may actually see that sameness from a deeper point of view than the bodily viewpoint. Many people make the mistake of thinking that they can find equality without finding a basis for it. On the physical plane there is no such thing as equality. No two people are alike in their brain-power or in their physical make-up. Their attitude, their atmosphere, everything is different; but beneath all these differences, we touch a solid foundation, the Reality of man, and that is what the sages have discovered.

When a man partakes of this consciousness, no longer can he recognize anyone as an enemy, for in all he beholds one identical Spirit. "He who sees Me in all and all in Me, from him I vanish not, nor does he vanish from Me. He who being established in unity, worships Me dwelling in all beings, that Yogi, howsoever living, abides in Me." This is Sri Krishna's teaching, as recorded in the Bhagavad-Gita; and in the great Isa Upanishad we find the same thought, the identical meaning:

"He who sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings, he never turns away from It (the Self). He who perceives all beings as the Self, for him how can there be delusion or grief, when he sees this oneness (everywhere)?"

Seeing "the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self" means not this little self—Mr. So-and-So or Mrs. So-and-So—not that self. It means the real Self, the undying part of man's being. United with That, one finds a relationship with the whole universe, a new vista opens, a new life, a new consciousness, and in that alone lies the remedy for all our ills. United with That, one rests in the Supreme, "neither rejoicing on receiving the pleasant, nor grieving on receiving the unpleasant." This state is called even-mindedness. Yet do not imagine that the sages, who, we are told, have transcended pleasure and pain, are therefore unfeeling, and that the reason they have an even temperament is because they do not meet with perplexities such as the ordinary man has to encounter. The reverse is true. They have to deal with many problems, perhaps more than the average person is called upon to meet. In spite of this, however, they hold themselves steady in the face of praise and blame, honor and dishonor, the pleasant and the painful. That is what even-mindedness means. It is not difficult to be good and happy and peaceful when everything is moving smoothly; there is no real proof of strength in that. But when one can maintain balance of mind and heart, even when things go wrong, and in the midst of difficulties and dangers can continue to look up to the ideal and remain steadfast—that is the real test.

A man with intellectual theories may draw the admiration of people. Hearing his flow of words, they may say: "What a wonderful person!" But the question is, can he maintain his equilibrium under severe trial? Is he really the master of himself? If he is not, his natural tendencies will betray him, no matter what pretences he may make. A parrot may be taught to sing holy songs and repeat holy words, but when the monkey or the cat gets after him, he forgets all

he has learned and screeches according to his parrot nature.

The same way it is with us. If we do not try, through our constant thought and aspiration, to gain control of our lower instincts, when the moment of struggle comes, they overwhelm us, and forgetting our divine purpose, we show forth the ordinary elements in our make-up. That is why it is so necessary for us to bind ourselves with strong thought, meditation and prayer, until the higher state becomes a habit. Then we cannot forget, then we follow the loftier course instinctively and naturally.

Unfortunately we are too often inclined to think that all is ordained by some unseen Power and that a man's blessings or shortcomings are predetermined; therefore nothing that we can do will make any difference. In this way we may try to throw the whole responsibility on that Power, but the wisdom of India tells us that it is because of the veil of ignorance that we take this attitude, and that as soon as the ignorance is destroyed, the knowledge of the supreme, indwelling Self will shine forth like the sun and reveal our innate divinity.

"Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free." There is no monopoly over Truth. No religion, no philosophy, no group of people can say that it has the entire right to it. We all have equal rights. Truth is the common property of all people; but it can be known only through our own feeling, through our own power of assimilation.

In India, one is constantly reminded that one's duty does not end with the mere hearing about Truth. Anyone who thinks he knows It because he has read of It or heard about It, and that there the whole thing ends, is mistaken. His knowledge must be extended still farther. As he reads, he should seek to reflect upon what he is reading and observe how closely his own nature responds to the ideals expressed,

and how closely he can make it respond. In the Gita, Sri Krishna tells his disciple that no one can attain the spiritual path or gain a glimpse of true immortality who is not tranquil. One who lacks fortitude, who is afflicted by such fleeting things as heat and cold, pleasure and pain, success and failure, he is unfitted to attain the immortal. Therefore, knowing how transitory are these conditions, we should fortify our hearts and seek to unite with our true being.

The man who takes an attitude of negation is often frightened by the changing circumstances of life. To him Sri Krishna says: "My son, all these varying things are born from contact of the senses with sense-objects; they are born and they die. Today they exist; tomorrow they are not; therefore endure them bravely." When everything in our life seems to be covered by cloud and gloom, if then we sink in despair, what resistance shall we have to meet our problems? What power? If, on the other hand, we bring in a little ray of spiritual courage, it acts just like a ray of sunlight; at once it dispels the darkness and eliminates many difficulties.

So long as we identify ourselves with the small aspect of our being, we shall constantly be made miserable and make others miserable. It is not until we have become imbued with the One Spirit, the unbounded, eternal Spirit, that we discover the joy in life and are able to convey it to our fellows.

The joy that is born of higher vision is not the kind of joy one finds on the sense plane which has beginning and end, for it is born of what is called contact with Brahman—bliss eternal, unconditioned. This requires a little explanation. The sages and seers of India describe this joy as unconditioned, because it is not dependent on material things. Those who do depend on the material may have a certain amount

of happiness, but it is not lasting. Those, however, who find within their own Self the goal that they are seeking, are enabled through their evenness of spirit to maintain their happiness no matter what occurs on the outside. We may theorize and be skeptical; we may ridicule such statements, but our judgment is of no worth until we, also, have entered that kingdom of realization and have experienced its bliss.

There are many who believe that for final liberation from imperfection we must wait until we are dead. But when we die we carry our life and character with us; the atmosphere that we have created through our thoughts and feelings will accompany us wherever we go. When we learn to value our divine part and affiliate with it, when the body and senses obey the dictates of the Soul, so that this personal being is like an instrument, then our life becomes truly fruitful, and there is harmony and peace.

"The sages whose imperfections are washed off, whose doubts are destroyed, and who are engaged in doing good to all beings, attain supreme liberation."

Sri Krishna gives here the real goal of human existence. We all long for happiness; there is no soul who does not. If we are honest, we shall admit it. We are like fireflies and moths, who attracted by the glow of fire and light, often burn themselves in the flame. All this restlessness and mad rush after pleasure, without any discrimination, brings only reaction and unhappiness. Man must find a balance within himself, in his thoughts, in his habits. For it is only as we gain balance that we can practice our simple daily duties efficiently, and it is out of the simple things we do every day that the big things come to us.

Many do not accept this. Many desire immediate name and fame. They are anxious to come into prominence—to appear great before the eyes of men. But in order to gain

either material or intellectual rewards, we have to work; we have to practice certain qualities. Even when no one is seeing or observing us, we observe ourselves. Therefore let us do what we do, not for outward praise, but for the sake of our ideal.

Make your ideal necessary to your life, a vital influence. Let it accompany you. For out of that devotion, out of the great, ardent spirit that will grow up in your heart toward it, you will find realization. Realization never comes to one who is thoughtless or indifferent, but to him whose heart and soul are surrendered to the Divine, to him it comes in all its power and glory.

GOLDEN BELLS

By Dorothy Hanson

Today Forsythia shakes once more
The golden bells of spring.
Gray squirrels stop to listen,
And bluebirds on the wing.

How daintily the chimes ring out
As for a fairy's ears,
In fragile cadence echoing
The music of the spheres!

They peal out blithesomely to cheer
All creatures that draw breath:
Cocoon to golden butterfly—
Life's triumph over death.

A favored mortal, I am given
God's beauty for a toy,
To melt my frost-encrusted heart
In carillons of joy!

THE PROPERTY DIVINE

By Sister Devamata

(From Class Talks on the Bhagavad-Gita)

Today we shall consider a few of those qualities which mark what is called in the Bhagavad-Gita, the "Property Divine"; that is, those qualities which indicate that a man is in his divine state, and which are native to his inward spirit and must be present in his personality to a large extent before illumination can take place. Also we shall consider what psychological conditions we shall have to meet in the process of acquiring them.

"Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in the practice of the higher Self-knowledge, charitable gifts, control of the senses, sacrifice, study of the sacred scriptures, austerity, simplicity, non-injury, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, peace, absence of calumny, compassion to beings, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty and absence of fickleness, vigor, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred and pride, these," says the Gita, "belong to one born with the divine property."

Now these qualities are natural to us and we interfere with nature when we do not permit our soul to manifest them. We should always keep in mind the true picture of man, that he is not lost, not utterly helpless—a fallen thing waiting to be picked up. The qualities and possibilities of the highest salvation we all hold within ourselves now. It is not that we are going to be saved: we *are* salvation. The power of the highest salvation is ours at this very moment. There is no question even of acquiring anything; it is merely a question of taking this life just as it is—body, mind and heart —and lifting it into its higher state.

In the realm of physics, if you take ice, a solid, dense, unpliable substance with which little can be done, and increase

its vibration through heat, you turn it into something that is fluid — water — which has great potential power, and by means of which big things can be accomplished. If again you increase its vibration, you get steam, which is even more powerful; and all the time it is just hydrogen and oxygen.

So with us. It is solely a matter of increasing vibration through the fire of consecration—of raising the matter of our bodies, of purifying our minds. Increase of vibration means purification and of itself automatically throws off all that is clogging and base. A constantly uplifted mind, therefore, cannot fail to eliminate whatever is detrimental to spiritual progress. This should be a great consolation to us all.

One of the most important lessons for us to learn is in relation to Law—cosmic Law. We have an idea that a natural law is something like a hammer in the closet—to be used by us when we need it. But the law applies itself; we do not have to apply it. All we have to do is to discover it and then cease to interfere with it. It will take care of the rest. We know that if we hold something up in our hand, the law of gravitation cannot operate. That is true also in regard to the higher laws. Just as there is this law of gravitation, there is a law of divine salvation, of divine purification. Water will always struggle to rise to its source, and nature is just like that. There is a struggle within us too, the struggle of the soul to rise to *its* Source. Its Source is God, and the only reason it has not risen to that height is because we are hindering it by our lower desires. If we cease to hold on to these, immediately we ascend to our God-level.

The *Sattwica* state, or state of illumination, is the natural state of the mind, or the soul. We are restless and discontented only when we are out of our native element. This

world and these very passing worldly enjoyments are not natural for us. There is an element within us that is ever trying to rise above these, and if we could but realize this and let it rise, without seeking further to cheat it with cheap imitations of the real, it would at once return to its divine origin.

We must always keep in mind the end toward which we are moving. The moment that our mind becomes purified it will attain a serenity and calmness that cannot be broken, and at that very moment, the light of knowledge will shine forth and we shall behold our true Self, the God within, the goal of our seeking.

Let us now take up the different qualities. In former classes we have already reviewed the first seven of these, so now we shall begin with the eighth, *Austerity*—its meaning and purpose. Austerity must not be understood as the mortification of the flesh. It does not mean doing violence to ourselves in any way: it means eliminating non-essentials. The practice of denial that we may be called upon to go through, is not for the sake of denial. It is like lighting a fire in us in order to separate the dross from the gold. Its purpose is to remove from our system all that clogs or disturbs us, so that we may feel light and free. When the mind is heavy, dense and dull and the body inactive, life seems hardly worth the living. Sometimes this comes through fatigue or through heavy sleep in the daytime. Actually, however, we are in that state all the time. Our mind is operating through a cloud; we are not seeing anything clearly; but because we are so used to this condition, we are not ordinarily aware of it. Austerity, by its flame of devotion and of yearning for God, burns out all this density, clarifies our vision and drives away the clouds. Suddenly we have a feeling both of physical and mental lightness; we move without

any sense of weight and our whole being seems illumined.

You may wonder how one goes about the practice of austerity. Begin by throwing out of your life all that is not vital to your higher purpose. Throughout the day this will touch your varying occupations. People who are seriously employed do not sell their time for cheap coin. The same thing applies to amusements. Our life should be consistent all the way through. Everyone needs a certain amount of recreation, but it should be in rhythm with the deep pulse of our being, and not alien to our main purpose. In connection with reading, you should challenge everything and ask yourself: "Is this essential?" In short, you must keep the fire of discrimination burning all the time, so that it may consume whatver does not relate to your ideal.

The quality of *Simplicity* quite naturally follows that of austerity. The very moment that you begin to get rid of non-essentials, you will be surprised to find how simple your life becomes. It is not the vital things that crowd our hours; it is not simple food or clothes that overtax us: it is always the extra thing.

Analyze it and you will find that a man is rich not by the amount of his income, but by the width of the margin between his desires and the end of his income. Whenever your desires come to the margin of your income, or go beyond it, you are poor, even poverty-stricken. There are two ways of enriching yourself in life. One is, to stretch your income; but then your desires are apt to jump on behind and strike on the heels of your bank account. The other way, is to leave your income as it is and reduce your desires—increase the margin that way. The man who has drawn in his desires and redirected them toward the Ideal, will have a sense of abundance; his riches become the universal riches that can never be exhausted and which never fail to satisfy the soul.

Simplicity is an essential practice and is concerned not only with the way we clothe the body but with the way we clothe our speech. It means straightforwardness—no deception anywhere, no saying a word with a different accent that conveys another meaning; not the slightest duplicity, no doubling in anything. What we call renunciation means merely reducing an outline to its simplest form.

People are more and more coming to realize that beauty and simplicity are almost synonymous terms. In music, in art, in everything there should be that simplicity. It is characteristic of certain houses. When you enter the great rooms of the wonderful chateaux in Europe, you are conscious not so much of the furniture within them as of the space that they enclose. On the other hand, when you go into the room of a disorganized, petty individual, you find that it is full of all kinds of little dust-gathering objects, wearisome to the eye. This is true throughout life. People with small minds fill their days and thoughts with bric-a-brac. Simplicity means stripping our life right down to the essential. It means going deep down inside ourselves. The further in we go, the bigger things we find. All little things are on the surface. We shall be surprised at the realm of untold riches we shall reach when we turn our attention within.

Following Simplicity comes *Non-injury*. This is a natural sequence, because the reason that we injure people is due to the fact that they interfere with the satisfaction of our desires. They stand in our way and we feel that we have to get rid of them. The very moment we start to build our life on a true and lasting basis, our relation to our fellow-beings becomes rhythmic and harmonious.

There is a great plenty of essential things in the world—plenty of air and plenty of light; plenty of earth and plenty of water. Life itself is endless. The man who realizes this,

who realizes the infinity of nature's bounty, never has any sense of rivalry or of contending interests. It is the finite that leads us to these feelings and which causes us to injure other people.

Truthfulness is the next quality to follow, and it does not mean just telling the truth. The practice of truthfulness, in this more fundamental consideration, is to cultivate the faculty of truthfulness. It means, first of all, learning to hear accurately, to see accurately and with precision. It means cultivating perfect accuracy in all our sense perceptions. How much of untruthfulness arises from the habit of carelessness in listening! For instance, we hear half a sentence, then we make up our mind what the rest of the sentence is going to be, and cease to listen. We pass that half sentence on to somebody else, who does the same thing; and so it goes, till bye and bye when the sentence comes back to the original speaker, there is only one letter of one word that is correct. No one who transmitted it had the slightest thought of telling a lie, but the habit of precision was lacking.

There is another type of person who hears correctly, but has the habit of thinking over what has been heard. When he repeats it, he adds to it his own thought, so that what he gives out as an exact quotation is the original statement plus his own ideas. Thus you can see that the largest part of the falsehood that is going around the world is due not to any wilful tendency to deceive, but to a lack of ability to convey the truth. Yet truthfulness is necessary to the apprehension of Truth. If you cannot hear ordinary sentences correctly and are unable to repeat them accurately, how will you understand the Voice of God when It speaks? If a man cannot go home and describe accurately something he has seen, how could he possibly interpret with precision a vision that might come to him?

People who build up a whole system of Truth often base it on misconceptions such as these. They begin by distorting a little bit of Truth which has attracted their mind, and they end by creating something that is often terribly false. The wise man acts differently. When he receives a fragment of Truth he goes deeper within himself and meditates upon it. Gradually, in this way, he develops the habit of right apprehension, and grows ever more and more humble.

Truth is too big for any individual to express; but when through the cultivation of the faculty of truthfulness a person has made himself into a perfectly accurate instrument, Truth will express itself, unobstructed, through him.

Now one of the greatest conditions for gaining this faculty is *Absence of Anger*. Loss of temper is always the result of an underlying cause. It is like bubbles on the surface of a lake, rising from deep down underneath the water. The seed of anger that led perhaps to a murder, was, at the start, just one small thought of criticism, just one little ripple of impatience. As long as a person allows himself to see the irritating side of anything, the shadow side, he is opening himself to an ultimate fit of anger. The first time he yields to this tendency, there may be only the ripple; the next time, the ripple has developed into a wave, and finally it becomes a storm. Unfortunately, however, we do not think of this when first we give way to annoyance.

In the Gita, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna: "Impelled by what power does a man commit sin, even against his wish, constrained as it were by force?" Sri Krishna replies: "It is desire; it is anger."

Desire and anger are the obverse and reverse of the same thing. We desire a person to be one way, and he is another, and we get angry. We desire conditions to be according to a certain plan, and they go contrary to it, and we get angry.

Anything that goes against our individual idea of the way it should be is apt to rouse our resentment. When, this resentment grows into anger, we lose our discrimination, and we are lost along with it.

If a man had within his body the germ of some mortal disease, he would try very hard to get rid of it. But anger is a very serious moral disease the germs of which are the little passing irritations we feel over trivial things, and it is in these early stages that we should destroy it. Trying to control it at its moment of explosion is like waiting to check a disease when the temperature has risen to 105 or 106 degrees. Then all you can hope to do is to keep the patient alive. Anger should be destroyed at the root.

Anything that is out of harmony forms the beginning of anger. Anger includes rebellion, impatience, resentment, discontent, doubt, criticism, hostility. All of these are the natural expression of the state of *Rajas,* that is, the state of over-activity, restlessness, nervousness. Anger depends not upon your will, but upon the moral state of your mind. That is the reason it says in the Gita that even a wise man acts in conformity with nature. If you really do not want to grow angry or have any mental or emotional upsets, then watch for those small seeds and do away with them before they begin to grow.

Actually anger is not a question of external provocation. There is nothing at all outside of us that is keeping us from manifesting our Soul nature; the responsibility lies wholly with us. Every single human being by throwing out these pernicious germs from his being can lift himself out of any condition.

There is not a person who does not long to be the embodiment of perfection, though he may not know what it is for which he longs. We all have this great, seething soul-

power within us that is struggling to emerge. Who does not wish for complete knowledge—knowledge upon which he can depend and by which he can know that what he apprehends as truth is the truth? Who does not want to feel that he has life which nothing can take from him? Yet we let these little fits of anger come and cheat us of all this. We sell our birthright for a mess of pottage.

You can see why *Renunciation* is the next quality after absence of anger. Once you begin to renounce your desires you will cease to have any trouble with anger. You have to lose one or the other. The wise man tries to lose the desire; the foolish man loses his temper.

Renunciation is not to cheat us of anything; it is only to rid us of the cheap side of life; it is to give us things of value and do away with all things that are counterfeit. You cannot practice this virtue in relation to yourself without practicing it in relation to every living creature. The thing in you and the thing outside you have to rise and fall together. When you cease to concentrate on the evil conditions in the world, or in others, you may be sure that you are outgrowing those conditions in yourself. Therefore do not spend your time finding fault with your neighbor; you have not the time to spare. You have plenty to do nearer home. That is the thing to remember. Practice of these fundamental qualities should cover the whole area of your consciousness, from one shore of your being to the other. There must be but one level all the way through.

After Renunciation we come to *Peace*. The real things of life never disturb our peace; it is always the unreal things, because they shift and change and vanish. No sooner do we get hold of them than they begin to fade away. You buy something and the next day it is already wearing out. But whoever went to sleep at night troubling about whether

there would still be fresh air to breathe in the morning?

If we bring ourselves, our interests, our ambitions, into harmony with the cosmic Law, make our will one with the Great Will, we shall know perfect peace—not a peace of sleep but a peace of action. God is keeping the whole universe moving, so that whoever is in line with His Will must move with Him.

One cannot possibly be peaceful and at the same time indulge in calumny. Therefore *Absence of Calumny* comes next in the list of qualities. Calumny is due to a broken condition on the surface of the mind, causing refraction. To illustrate, if we put a stick in water, the stick looks bent, and if there are ripples on the surface of the water, it will look not only bent but seasick. This gives the entire picture of calumny, by which the mind sees things as if they were refracted and broken-up. When the mind becomes perfectly still, in a purified or single state, then by the serene light of knowledge we perceive our own reality, which presupposes the power to see the reality of every other creature. Anyone who is conscious of his soul-light sees only the soul-light in others. For this reason it is impossible for one who is spiritually awake to indulge in calumny or gossip.

The subtle body is just as susceptible to wounds as is the gross body. You may often wonder why you feel heaviness or a pain at your heart when there is no apparent cause for it. Perhaps it is because someone is dealing you a blow through condemnation or misrepresentation. It would be better for that person to stick a knife in your heart, for that would be an open wound and could be healed, but these hidden wounds are subtle and terrible, and no spiritual being could inflict them.

Out of absence of calumny comes *Compassion*. Compassion is one of the most beautiful words in the English

language. There is something about this quality so lofty and at the same time so lowly! When we begin to feel compassion it is as if we had gathered every living thing against our heart, wanting to protect them not only from the world, but from ourselves, from our own limitations. Buddha, the Compassionate, felt the suffering of the goats that were to be sacrificed and offered his life in their stead. This quality we must cultivate in our heart if we would know the Property Divine.

Compassion, like all ultimate qualities, is cultivated in the beginning by reflection. What we think, that we become. If we keep the picture of Christ or Buddha, or some other compassionate being, in our consciousness, before we know it something of their consciousness is established in us. There is nothing that brings greater dignity, greater sweetness, greater peace or serenity in life than just this one quality; because when we have compassion there is a mellowness within us that wipes away all the harsh, discordant elements in our nature—everything that sets us at odds with our brother.

Whenever we feel any thought of criticism, anger or resentment arising within us, if we turn to Christ and see Him as He prayed for those who were about to crucify Him; or if we think of Buddha with his pitiful heart—if we hold such thoughts in our mind, we shall quickly experience a very different emotion. We should always try to draw this type of picture when any harsh impulse is about to dart out from us toward someone else.

Let us conquer passion with compassion. Let us cultivate the power of perception so that we may behold the Real. Then peace, renunciation, absence of anger and the practice of all blessed qualities will become easy. It is the unreal things over which we fight. If we seek only the Real, we shall always be in harmony with every living thing.

LIVING

By Olive Chinn

Ah Life, Thou leavest me desireless, unfettered, free!

I seem to move through time as the fleecy clouds floating across the evening sky, gently, softly—meeting Thy experiences with spontaneous resilience in my Union with everything.

I seem to flow as the waters, along my way, fluid-like in my going; meeting the rocks and crags of Life (where once I splashed and thundered madly) in quiet non-resistance, spilling o'er them evenly, to flow on and on to where I melt into Union with other waters flowing just as I.

I seem to flow as the magical words from the poet's pen, rhythmically, melodiously, blending with all Life into one magnificent sonnet, majestically and equally sung by all.

I seem to flow as the tuneful notes from the hands of the music-makers, rising and falling in expressive cadences, resolving harmoniously into Life's symphonic Master-piece, composed of everything.

I seem to flow as the brilliant colors from off the artist's brush, falling and melting into Life's perfect painting, where all comprise one flawless Whole.

I seem to move as the many threads of the weaver's skillful choosing, woven mysteriously and minutely into Life's varied Tapestry of one magnificent Pattern.

I seem to rise as the smoke from a camp-fire, wafted here and there with a gust of air, only to unite again in an even flow, rising to unite with Life's Ether, onward, upward, everywhere and nowhere.

I seem to give in Life as the sapling tree, bending with the wind, easily, bowing graciously with the hurricanes of

Life and rising again in their passing, only to bow again in their returning, bending with all Life, and humbly.

Ah Life, Thou leavest me desireless, unfettered, free!

Every lover of Beauty becomes over-soon aware of that tragic shadow, the destruction of beauty: the destruction of joy which is in itself a kind of beauty—the fallen tree, the fire-scarred mountainside, the disease-stricken body. Since I saw many beautiful things destroyed, and sympathized keenly, for a time at least, with human misery, this shadow spread and blackened about me till it became a torture.

At the blackest moment suddenly I understood that Beauty is outside of and independent of all form. It is imperishable. Here we see only the poor image of Beauty, as one might see the sun reflected in a mud puddle. A passing urchin stirs the water and the image is broken; but the sun remains!

Reaching out toward this Beauty—conceived at once as formless and having every form—understanding it to be approached as much through sorrow as through joy, one apprehends the fringe of it as an ecstasy, lifting mind, body and soul beyond the trammeled existence we mistakenly call life. —*Ella Young in "Flowering Dusk."*

Not to commit any sin, to do good, and to purify one's mind, that is the teaching of all the Awakened. The Awakened call patience the highest penance, long-suffering the highest Nirvana; for he is not an anchorite who strikes others, he is not an ascetic who insults others.

Not to blame, not to strike, to live restrained under the law, to be moderate in eating, to sleep and sit alone, and to dwell on the highest thoughts—this is the teaching of the Awakened. —*Dhammapada.*

CAN WE PRACTICE YOGA?

By Srimati Gayatri Devi

(Sunday address delivered November 6, 1940, at the Vedanta Centre of Boston.)

The subject of Yoga is indeed a very fascinating one. It not only enthralls the true spiritual seekers, but attracts those who seek personal improvement or power. For the last half-century, since the teaching of India began to captivate the interest of the American people, a broader and more comprehensive knowledge of this vast subject has gradually been spreading through the country. In India, Yoga is regarded not merely as a philosophy but a science as well, with definite application and use. It is most gratifying for some of us to discover that while formerly Yoga was associated with the idea of magic, rope tricks or lying on spikes, nowadays people read enough in order to recognize that it is neither magic nor a superficial technique by which a man may gain his small ends, but rather, a powerful and accurate science offering effective means and ways for his betterment.

In the event there is someone in this group unfamiliar with the subject, may I take a moment to give a few elemental facts? The word "Yoga" means, "that which unites." Therefore, "Yoga," translated broadly, becomes "union." It is also the technique of union, and on this technique the science of Yoga is founded. The practice of it entails clear and comprehensive knowledge of the science, and intelligent application of its technique.

Yoga can be divided into three distinct parts. The first deals with the physical body. There is one form of Yoga which is primarily physical and is spoken of in Sanskrit as Hatha Yoga. Many acrobats and athletes in India practice Hatha Yoga for one specific reason, that is, maintenance of health. This has great appeal to the West, and is also a

type of philosophy which is prevalent in this country. It is the philosophy that must be applied to preserve perfect health.

Recently you read in the newspaper about our Prime Minister Nehru's habit of four hours of sleep. Of course, he is an extremely active man. If you had followed the schedule during his three-week tour in this country, you would have wondered how a man could have endured the strain of such public activities. The newspaper mentioned the fact, how every morning he stands on his head for a few seconds. Well, that particular practice is no more than a small expression of Hatha Yoga. Why does a man stand on his head? You might ask some doctor, who would tell you that such exercise has a very definite effect on man's respiratory, and circulatory system. It does no harm, in fact, can do a great deal of good. We need not attach any mystical or mysterious meaning to it. It is simply one practice by which body derives certain benefit.

There are a number of practices which are constantly in use for the specific purpose of improving the body. Physical Yoga is chiefly concerned with the muscles, the nervous system, and the breath. When Uday Shankar, our famous dancer, was in this country we saw him on the American stage as a master artist. His publicity agents wrote about his work introducing some sensational elements, because that is what attracts most people. We read in the magazines about this dancer's superb control over the two hundred and fifty muscles of his body. Here again I want to call your attention to a form of Yoga. A man can learn, at will, to exercise his muscles which ordinarily serve him involuntarily, and gain voluntary control over them through practice.

The control of breath is, of course, the chief aspect of physical Yoga. The Yogis proclaim that breath is not only

life, it is power and energy. The man who knows voluntary control and use of breath is a master. According to the natural law of the body we breathe involuntarily. We are so organized as not to have any control over it. But the Yogi has discovered that this breath by which man lives can be brought under his conscious command. This knowledge has gradually led to the development of the technique: how to hold the breath, how to send it through the entire physical system at will, how to reach the obscure parts of the body. One of the claims of the Yogi is to heal an ailing organ of the human body by the act of breathing. I certainly do not wish to state these facts dogmatically. I am only pointing out what can be found in writing as the experiments of Yoga. If certain claims are made, we are to realize that they are likely to have some basis of truth because man usually uses his own experience to prove facts. Anyone who practices Yoga comes to the conclusion that frequently man can be his own healer.

Here is a very interesting point. All of us recognize the need of good, sound health. Even those who do not like to use health as a primary end of existence are aware of the fact that the body being man's instrument, its soundness and healthfulness are of great importance. Thus when a man practices Yoga, making bodily perfection his chief objective, he should not be regarded altogether as a materialist. Even those who are interested in the subject from a spiritual standpoint, are advised to keep their body in perfect order. The other aspects of Yoga become easy of application if the foundation is right. We must always bear in mind it is through the body that the senses, the mind and the spirit of man operate. Therefore, we can never take the attitude, "It does not matter what happens to the body. We can torture it, mortify it, or drive it to the extreme; it will still lead us to

the spiritual goal." That is not possible. Thus the technique of Yoga, helping man to prepare himself physically, should be given proper respect.

If man were primarily a physical being, he would be satisfied with all the techniques of keeping himself absolutely intact. Yoga promises eternal youth. This would appeal to the American ladies, who have horror of growing old. It is true that a person can maintain undying youth through the practice of Yoga. But suppose we have achieved that end? What has really been gained? As Swami Vivekananda once said, "After you have acquired a perfectly healthy body, you have only become the healthiest animal. Is that the aim of life?" Unailing body and beauty of youth may be desirable, but these are not all life has to offer us. Therefore, we must have bigger aims and not be enamored of the small fruits of Yoga.

Now we approach Yoga as it is applied to the mind. Patanjali (whose name should not be unfamiliar to you because of the Classes held here on Tuesday nights on Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms) is called the Father of the Yoga System. He gives one very interesting definition of Yoga: "*Chitta vritti nirodha yoga.*" What is Yoga? It is the control of *chitta vritti* or the tendencies. We need not be psychologists to appreciate that we operate chiefly by our tendencies, which express themselves through our desires. When we begin to apply Yoga to the mind, we realize that here we are to deal with Nature from which proceed tendencies.

In this connection, I would like to make one point very clear. Suppression and control are two distinct and separate acts. One can deaden one's natural tendencies by repressive measures. That is not control. Control means command over nature through the power of will. There is a passage in the Bhagavad Gita on which I have commented quite fre-

quently. "By not giving food to the senses, one can deaden all the feeling of the senses, but longing still lingers in the heart." The practice of Yoga teaches that restraint by which one can rule the tendencies, which so often play havoc with us. When they are uppermost, the reasoning faculty does not properly function. After all, if man is to live intelligently, he cannot do without reason or the power of discrimination. He learns the use of keen discernment in order to gain control and eventual supremacy over his tendencies.

You ask, "What kind of Yoga is this which grants power over the tendencies?" The mind, or, let me say, the subtler faculties of the mind, has the power to bring the tendencies under control. But this cannot be done without a specific high objective. Who is interested in restraining his tendencies? Only the man who has a superior aim in mind, one who wants to accomplish something for himself, one who would like to be his own master. And as he is aware of these aspirations, through his own choice he learns to deal with the tendencies by the power of the spiritual, which is the true part of his own self. It would be impossible for a man to learn that Yoga which controls his tendencies, without first arousing within himself cognition of the Spirit which underlies his body, senses and mind.

In the practice of Yoga we must move from the physical to the mental and from the mental to the spiritual. It is on the spiritual plane where Yoga plays its most vital part. The highest form of Yoga is meditation, which simply means holding one's entire attention of mind and consciousness, without deviation or interruption, on one subject. That subject is Spirit. Well, we have all tried to practice meditation and learned that it is not a child's play. We aim at the control of all the mental forces by giving them a focus. The mind runs wild, going in all directions. Before we can concentrate and

bring the mind to a state of equilibrium and quietude, we pass through many struggles. But if we are steadfast in practice and remain undiscouraged in repeated failures, we are bound to succeed.

This brings us to the question involved in this morning's subject: "Can we practice Yoga?" You already know that the answer is to be in the affirmative. Physical Yoga will help in the preservation of a healthy vehicle — the body; mental Yoga will enable us to check and direct the waves of tendencies keeping our mind in emotional upheaval; and meditation will lead us to ultimate union with our Self, the Spirit dwelling within.

At this point I can hear you say: "You have never encouraged Yoga practices, and now you are advocating them!" It would do us no harm, and the body would remain supple, if each morning we took a few wholesome exercises. A moderate practice of breathing would be beneficial for everyone. It would teach a certain rhythm to the heart and lungs. So many people breathe unrhythmically, specially when they are under emotional stress. By breath control one can help quiet the upheavals of emotional disturbances. Unfortunately, when we are in the throes of distress, we forget everything. After the storm has passed we feel regret or remorse. Therefore, if we could first gain control over ourselves through spiritual aspiration and practice, in emergency and test our body and mind will react in accordance with that established habit.

In meditation, when the mind becomes absolutely still, breath is not only quiet, it is rhythmic and soundless. In the highest form of meditation, a person entering into the stage of Samadhi, or superconsciousness, practically stops breathing. Sri Ramakrishna frequently frightened his companions because his breath would become so still that it created the

illusion of utter lifelessness. This is merely to illustrate how the mind and consciousness, when united with the inner Spirit, influence the breath and the body.

This morning there is no time for enlarging upon the four principal branches of Yoga known as Bhakti, Karma, Jnana and Raja Yoga. However, it will be interesting to learn something about various forms of Yoga which you and I can practice as normal human beings. We may not even call them Yoga because as soon as you say you practice Yoga, your friends become apprehensive. There is great anxiety expressed over you because there is misconception and misunderstanding of the subject, and hence the fear. But if you by your practice show its effects on your life and character and say nothing to your friends, you will be the gainer from every standpoint. My advice to you is: learn Yoga, not for finding something mysterious or for satisfying some small desire within yourself, but from the motive of spiritual improvement, then you will see the good you have accomplished.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna gives one definition of Yoga which is quite in keeping with the practices you and I need to go through in our daily life. Here is something neither spectacular nor sensational, but rather a teaching full of common sense. The Gita proclaims, "*Yoga karma sukaushalam,*" or "Skillfulness in action is Yoga."

Everyone of us in some measure appreciates the merit of such utterance. Every worker must aim at skillfulness—he must become a perfectionist. Here is placed before us the highest ideal in action. We are not to work in a slipshod manner. Why work at all if we do not care anything about it? We must work skillfully, with concentration and with an eye to perfection. When we are fulfilling these requirements we practice Yoga. So you see, an engineer, a crafts-

man, an artist, a man of any profession can pass as a Yogi. Only we do not think in terms of Yoga; therefore, we do not call him by that name. According to Indian philosophy, individual perfection in any field of activity eventually leads one to the Source of perfection. If only we would remember this great ideal and tune our own motive to it! A man of action can be a Yogi even as the man of meditation. We should not divide them by the fictitious barrier created by our own lack of understanding.

Another definition of Yoga is "*Samatvam yoga uchyate,*" "Evenmindedness is called Yoga." *Samatvam* is the "equal-mindedness" which keeps one even in pleasure and pain, under all duality. How we admire a man who does not "fly off the handle." How we would like to know his secret, the secret of his tranquillity and fortitude which nothing can disturb. We must remember that the practice of evenmindedness is often the result of "*chitta vritti nirodha*" or the control of tendencies. The person who is capable of controling his reactions insofar as not to be stirred by outer happenings, is truly a Yogi. He moves evenly through life maintaining his equilibrium and enjoys peace of mind. These two are invariably the possessions of one who is steadfastly engaged in the practice of Yoga.

While we live in this world of fluctuating circumstances where good fortune and adversity, loss and gain, success and failure alternate one another, we need the philosophy of evenmindedness to keep us unmoved. We never can alter the course of life. But shall we be affected by them? Should we lose our bearing? We must become fortified by understanding of Truth. This will increase our capacity to accept whatever life brings, remaining even-minded and serene.

There is another form of Yoga which is of great value to us. It is the Yoga of detachment. Here is a passage

from Hindu Scripture: "Know that state of separation from contact with pain as Yoga. This Yoga should be practiced with perserverence and undepressed heart." What a wonderful statement! If only we could practice it. It is not easy to separate ourselves from pain, either physical or mental. Often the latter is worse to bear. From experience we can testify that often physical suffering is less intense than the agony of mind. To learn the Yoga by which we can be disconnected from pain of body and mind is indeed an achievement. To what extent can we apply this? That would be determined by our state of consciousness. For instance, you are suffering from an aching tooth, and you say to yourself, "There is no pain in my tooth. It does not exist." What are you doing? You are trying to forget the pain by the power of thought. The physical sensation is there, but your mind is playing over the body or you are separating the body and mind. When the mind is released from the influence of the body, it works miracles for people. They not only gain endurance, but before they realize it, the pain is eliminated. Power of the Spirit does wonders for the mind as the mind transcends the afflictions. By taking the stand on the conviction that man is primarily Spirit, one can entirely sever oneself from the physical sensations and mental impositions and thus prove the efficacy of one form of Yoga.

You have heard over and over the incident in the life of Swami Turiyananda who had to undergo an operation in this country. He was known as a great Yogi. He was not a brilliant speaker, but a man of Spirit. He expressly asked the doctor not to give him anesthesia, but to allow him to go through the operation consciously. Those who live in the spiritual consciousness are never eager to be made unconscious. The doctor, knowing the calibre of the Swami, consented. According to his wish, the patient was permitted

to converse with his students on the subject of God. If the Swami was able to rise above the physical pain, it was no doubt due to his habitual practice of Yoga, enabling him to separate himself from the body-consciousness.

Let me now sum up the theme briefly. Yoga is neither spectacular nor sensational nor mysterious. It is a practice in which our body, mind and spirit can be trained. We are at liberty to use it for our own benefit. If our attraction to it springs from spiritual aspiration, it will serve to unite us with God. When we use it for mental helpfulness, we can gain control over our emotions and reactions. And if we are interested in the physical aspect, we enjoy good health and bodily well-being.

Swami Paramananda used to make a great impression on people by his youthful appearance. Once a lady who saw him in Chicago walked up to him and said, "I knew your father nearly twenty years ago, and I heard him lecture. He had the same bearing. You look quite like him and have the same name." Swami asked her a question or two and recalled that he had lectured in Chicago twenty years ago. So he told the lady that it was himself, not his father. Swami Paramananda had a keen sense of humor. When he returned to the Centre and related this incident to the Community, this is what he added: "I had such an urge to tell the lady that in this instance I and my father are one!" Swami had carried the glow of youth into his mature years. His philosophy, according to one of his admirers, was expressed in the following verse written in a light vein: "If you have no wrinkles in your brain, there'll be none on your face."

The whole idea is this: if you live spiritually, your whole being will be transformed. You will not grow old nor deteriorate. The cares of life will not weigh you down because by practice of Yoga you will raise yourself to a higher

plane of consciousness and become essentially a perfect being.

In conclusion, I read what our Scriptures give as the effects of the practice of Yoga. There is no doubt that such would attract us to practice, and once we have started to practice, we will find out that we can not be satisfied with small gains. We will desire the best and the highest. Thus through practice and application we will attain the Highest, which would mean union with the Spirit and eventually we would become established therein. "When the five-fold result of Yoga takes place, then there is no longer illness, old age, or pain for him who has obtained a body produced by the fire of Yoga. The first result of Yoga they call lightness, healthiness, steadiness, a good complexion and easy enunciation, a sweet odor and slight secretions." These are primarily physical gains. The spiritual benefit is defined by the following passage found in the Bhagavad Gita: "As a lamp placed in a windless spot does not flicker, the same simile is used to define a Yogi of subdued mind practicing union with the Self."

Some critics have dismissed the interest in religious books as an "escape." And so it is. But there is nothing wrong in escape, if one escapes from error to truth, from wrong to right. We all spend a large part of our time in "escaping" —from ignorance by study, from hunger by eating, from sickness by medical care. The question is: Escape from what to what? It is well to escape from darkness to light, and that is the escape that so many readers are seeking, that so many readers are certain that they have found. It is the escape that was found by the Wise Men and Shepherds who followed the star to Bethlehem.

—*Nash K. Burger in "New York Times Book Review."*

All Yoga is a seeking after the Divine.—*Sri Aurobindo.*

THE ORIENTAL TRINITY

By Sister Daya

(An Address delivered in the Temple of the Universal Spirit, Ananda Ashrama, Le Crescenta, California.)

In certain of the great religions of the world we find the worship of a threefold Deity. In the Western mind it is associated almost exclusively with the Christian dispensation, with the concept of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The idea of the Trinity, however, is probably as old as man. It must be, if it represents Truth. It must go back to the very roots of things. In Hindu religion and philosophy this idea of the Three, or the Trimurti, is found under the name of Brahma, the Creator; Vishnu, the Preserver, and Shiva, the Destroyer, more wisely called "The Transformer."

These three aspects have descended into Hindu thought and tradition from very ancient times. They began to emerge, as it were, into a more formalized expression, when the Hindus departed from the ancient Vedic worship of the elements—sun, wind, water, etc.—and under the Brahman caste, began to co-ordinate and organize these aspects of their former nature cult into a more definite religious philosophy in which the old-time gods reappeared, often under a new guise and with new powers. It was at about this time that the three great movements of Deity, represented by the Creator, the Preserver and the Transformer, became increasingly associated with the Hindu conception of the universe.

No one can go deeply into the sources of Hindu belief without coming upon a maze of tradition. The country is so ancient, it goes so far back into the night of time, that it happened there, as it has happened in other countries: the ancient myths and legends, the names of ancient gods, became incorporated into the new form.

An interesting example of this metamorphosis we find in

Ireland, where St. Bridgit, one of the most beloved of Irish saints, derives some of her titles and attributes from an early Celtic deity, Brigdhe or Bride, "goddess of women, of fire, of poetry," according to a modern authority on Celtic lore—Fiona Macleod.

It is extremely difficult, unless one is a scholar, to disentangle these threads and discover how each has contributed to the basic picture in the tapestry. Man's mind continually develops, or at least changes its focus, and as his knowledge grows and his vision of the universe shifts or widens, these adaptations gradually occur.

The reason why I chose this subject of the Three in One, however, was not because of its scholastic import, but because the Trinity is native to life itself. Personally I am not especially interested in dogmatic concerns, but rather in those truths that come close to the life of humanity, the life of the planet, the life of things as we see them, as they affect us—this is of vital concern to us all.

We must believe that whatever, in the over-all religious picture, becomes fixed in men's minds and consciousness, is so fixed because of its relationship with patent truth, with truth that confronts us at every turn in our own life and experience, as well as in the life and experience of the race. Does the idea of the threefold God symbolize such a truth?

Let me quote the exact definition of the Christian Trinity, as it is given in the first article of the Church of England:

"There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

As I read this statement I realize that there is no great

difference between its fundamental spiritual meaning and the meaning conveyed to the mind of an illumined Hindu by his Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; because these three, also, are held and included in One Great Reality.

This Reality has a dual implication in Hindu religious philosophy, which gives as a groundwork for the Trimurti, not Brahma, but Brahman the Absolute. This Brahman is beyond all definition, all limitation. Because of Its absoluteness one cannot think of It as acting, yet somehow this Brahman has brought forth (and these terms are merely relative) Brahma, the First-born, the Creator; Vishnu, the Preserver; and Shiva, the Destroyer or Transformer.

In later times, in certain parts of India, this whole expression (which involved the entire picture of cosmic manifestation) came also to be spoken of and worshipped as the Infinite Mother of the Universe. Sri Ramakrishna states that the Infinite Mother possesses the three aspects of creation, preservation and destruction.

The earlier worship did not stress the Divine Mother, but included the feminine principle by giving to each member of the Trinity Its female counterpart. Thus we read of Brahma and Saraswati; Vishnu and Lakshmi; Shiva and Uma. They were called by other names as well, all representing powers of the Mother, which later constituted the varying titles and aspects of the One Infinite Mother.

Since in this universe (which in its totality *is* the Mother) we find polarity — male, female; positive, negative—we can see why, in the early cosmo-conception, there was the idea of the male triad, with its counterpart. In the later concept of the Infinite Mother, as the Divine power or Shakti in the universe, we can understand that She incorporated the triune aspects in Herself.

Coming down from this cosmic picture to life itself, let

us imagine ourselves a native people; a savage people with no world of tradition and literature and great teaching behind us. Imagine ourselves here on this fair earth with nothing to guide us but our own eyes and ears and varying faculties. The one thing that would gradually impress itself upon our minds would be the fact of the three. First of all, in our personal existence, we would become aware of the father, the mother, the child. This is the basis for humanity. As we grew in mental stature we would behold this fact of three in the great sweep of birth and death and the time of apparent preservation between. Morning, noon, and night would add their testimony. We would see these three aspects written plainly over the face of nature; the aspects of creation, preservation, and seeming destruction.

In time we would also begin to sense a pervading oneness in the midst of the many. We would feel, though perhaps dimly, that our brother's life and our own life is the same life, and that everything seems to be moved by some common Power, which created the myriad forms of life and sustains them as the water sustains the leaves which float on its surface. Yet in this oneness we would continue to be aware of that dominating threefold force implicit in the cosmos.

Little by little the question would arise: What happens to a man when he dies? What happens to everything when everything dies? Where do creatures go? From where do they come? What is the Source, the great Source, from which stars are poured forth as water from a pitcher?

I think the sense of infinitude would press down upon our minds—upon the mind of man. And as we strove to comprehend that Infinitude—endless, beginningless—that Infinitude in which everything is forever contained—I think we would sink down upon our knees involuntarily, to worship That which none can grasp with the mind, or know with the

senses, and yet which sustains life and expresses it in thousands of ways throughout the encircling universe. A sense of wonder would fill the mind as there was evolved more clearly, more dynamically, an awareness of the One and of Its moving threefold, nay, millionfold aspect.

Whether or not the scheme of things appeals to us, no one can quarrel with these natural facts. Not only is the universe threefold, but we are threefold; we ourselves are Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, and we ourselves are the ultimate oneness. Looked at with a steady gaze, we see that the Great Mystery behind all things blesses with one hand and strikes us down with the other. This idea is very prominent in Hindu thought. One Power, many aspects.

The Christian Trinity does not include the idea of destruction, although it is a common thing to hear a Christian say of some terrible disaster: "It is the will of God." For the rest, the devil has been a very convenient scapegoat.

We of the Occident have been accustomed to think: "Well, if fortune is in my favor, if I can preserve those I love, as well as my health and my prosperity, it is through the favor of God. God is good to me. He is taking care of me." But if things are taken away, if our loved ones are harmed or die, if we no longer have the things to which we are accustomed, and suffer "bad fortune," then we cry out that God has deserted us, that we have been abandoned. Sometimes in these circumstances people lose their faith and grow bitter and resentful. Who has not heard it said: "A good God would not allow these things to happen."

If, however, the Oriental conception of the Triad is real to us, something to be applied in our own lives, then we say, "The Lord comes to me through this form. He comes to me through the form of loss, through the form of suffering, through the form of deprivation, and I know that He

will come to me some day even through the form of death."

Perhaps the Great Transformer reaches down to a life that is very dear to us. Is it cruel? Is it drastic, ruthless destruction? No. We see the closing of the circle. Shiva, the Great Lord, *Maha Deo* as they call Him in India, does not strike down merely to destroy in a sort of cosmic wantonness. He is also, in a sense, the Creator. In this great universe nothing is destroyed for destruction's sake; the final results show that another deeply underlying purpose was there. It is destroyed that new forms may be built, new combinations made, and that the indwelling Spirit may be given new and fresh vestments in this world of life.

Death is the Divine Hand that prevents a creature from becoming imprisoned forever in some crystallizing form that is shutting him away more and more from the great Source of inspiration and Truth. We see this exemplified in the dung heap—unpleasant and repulsive as it may be to us. Yet from it grow marvelous new blooms—lilies and roses. The garden needs it; it has to have the discarded elements —outworn and done with and cast away from us as unclean —in order that new life may spring into virgin beauty and purity.

Here we have the cycle of the Trinity, the complete round — the Creator, the Preserver, the Destroyer — a cycle in which the Transformer joins hands with the Creator and death becomes life. It is the wheel of life. We have too long taken life piecemeal; we have too long taken the sweet and excoriated the bitter as having nothing to do with Divinity. It has everything to do with it.

Omar Khayyam sings:

> "Ah love, could you and I with fate conspire
> To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
> Would we not shatter it to bits and then
> Remould it nearer to the heart's desire."

There are times when we feel that we could remould the scheme of things very nicely, according to our heart's desire. Every man feels it, and every man's desires are different. But we do not understand, never can understand with our mortal mind what lies behind this great act of interminable, never-ending creation. The great facts of the universe are here, definitely—the facts of life's opposites, the great experiences—pleasure and pain experiences, sunshine and shadow experiences. We cannot sweep the unpleasant things under the cosmic bed and say that they do not exist, that we refuse everything but the pleasant. That is not the way of the great, the wise, the spiritually illumined. They understand the nature of these happenings, more than understand them, for they feel the presence and the motion of God's Hand in them; and with that understanding the whole picture is changed.

We find many saints, saints of Christendom as well as of the Eastern countries, who worship God as He comes to them, even in the form of terror and death. The great Swami Vivekananda says that until one can accept pain as the kiss of the Infinite Mother, one has not yet come to know the meaning and the bliss of life. There has to be acceptance. This does not mean that one has morbidly to seek pain, or that when one is suffering one should do nothing about it. What matters is our attitude toward life, and what comprises life here in the physical.

Years ago I learned a little secret about pain, physical pain. I was suffering a great deal at that time and I found that when one is suffering one has a tendency to tighten every muscle. We resist pain with everything that is in us. But it is not overcome through resistance. The more we resist, the more we tighten, and the more we tighten the more severe that pain becomes. If, however, we would change our attitude a little bit and say: "I accept it! I open myself to this

experience and take it as the Divine coming to me in this form," we should, I believe, know relief. It will actually ease the condition. Any inflammation within you has a chance to be healed when it is no longer restricted and irritated by that tightening of the muscles which comes from resistance.

The same way it is with things in life that are hard to bear. Instead of shuddering and being in a tense, nervous state, welcome the event as if it were the Divine; really welcome it. It is, I know, extremely difficult to maintain such an attitude. We are full of fear, full of dread, full of resistance. We want to fence off the pleasant part of our life from the unpleasant. We all do. Yet until we have been able to see God in the painful, and accept Him thus in our hearts, it means that there is an aspect of life that will forever defeat us in our realization of the One. That realization has to be absolute and entire, so that there is nothing in life that can enter in to overthrow us. Otherwise a turn of circumstance, a little trick of fate, and all our bliss and all our God-vision and all our knowledge and security will be swept away by something beyond our control. But this cannot be; for in our hearts is the Truth, the Spirit which abides at the heart of the universe and which is invincible.

Can we not feel within our own being the movements of the Divine, the three aspects of the Hindu Trinity? Take, for instance, the creative urge. Who does not long to create, to build—through the arts, through beauty, through the mind. Everything in life has its foundation in that creative impulse. Man goes forth in his youth to build up a new world, to add his little bit to the great treasure-house of the ages. It is this impetus to be something, to do something that is worthy in the sight of God, that drives men on.

Then there is Preservation. That is the love aspect—the warm, preserving power of love. It broods over all things,

like the mother over the children—to keep them safe, to keep them from harm, to keep intact the beautiful, the whole — to nurture and to cherish. It has been said that that is the woman's part. Man is the builder. But both parts are necessary, very necessary, and both instincts are in the human heart. Whether we are men or women it is all the same —for what normal person does not desire to create the beautiful and useful and to preserve it. Between men and women it is only a question of accent.

Finally there is that other aspect, of which we have already spoken—the destructive, transforming aspect. It can be purely transforming, destroying only that it may recreate. And how well it is for us that when the passage of our life becomes clogged with thoughts and concepts that have become a weight and a detriment to us, a strength is born in our soul by virtue of which we are able to destroy these things, even sometimes things to which we have become attached; because we know that life has to be free, has to have ever new expression. But it is only as we keep our gaze fixed on ultimate Truth and Beauty, and not on the fact of destruction, that we are able to cut these elements out of our own heart as with a surgeon's knife. Sometimes we seem almost to have to tear our life up by the roots, when we feel that it has been growing in the wrong way. We do this in order that true growth may come.

It is this true growth within our mind, true happiness within our heart, the true well-being of ourselves and of others that should always be back of any act of apparent destruction. Unfortunately, however, we too often are merely the destroyer. The destructive element becomes like a growth that has gone beyond the original pattern made for it; it overgrows all bounds and develops into something malignant in the mind and the soul of man.

Therefore let our act of destruction, when it seems inevitable, always be an act of transformation. The One who makes all things new, that is Shiva. Be Shiva! Take into your heart the aged, the dying, the outcast and scorned, and bring them forth recreated.

In India the devotees have this attitude. They think of Shiva as almost—I was about to say—personified; yet that really is not the right word. They think of this third Person of the Hindu Trinity not just as a blind force. For them He represents Intelligence that has command over the transforming aspect of existence. So they bow down to the Great Lord, *Maha Deo*. They conceive Him as so full of compassion that He accepts all that the world discards. Everything that nobody else will have, Lord Shiva accepts. He takes them into His infinite heart, and the idea is that He transforms them into beauty and Truth.

After all, we need some such concept. We all need to be aware of that element in us which can take the most forlorn, the broken, the discarded, and somehow, by our love, by our understanding, by the God in us, transform them into new life and expression. The Christs and the Buddhas, and those who follow in their footsteps, do just that. They stoop down to lives that seem beneath contempt, and with infinite love and wisdom, reach right into the heart of those lives and re-form them into something of majestic beauty.

Thus we see that things in this life are interblended. Through experience, pain and suffering become compassion. There are times when every soul goes through some form of crucifixion; the heart is torn to shreds. In these moments we are so concentrated on the suffering that nothing else exists for us. It may be a lost love or a shattered ideal. It is gone, and the sun can shine and the flowers can bloom, and millions of people can move around us, and we are un-

aware of it. All we can think of is our loss. But if we can use our pain to give us entry into other hearts, our sorrow will melt away. I have tried this; I know that it works. The minute you begin to get out of yourself and are aware of the being of others and how you may aid them, your whole inner misery clears up.

Let your pain be your pathway into the hearts of others; then the walls of separation and darkness will crumble and you will find that the Creator, the Preserver and the Transformer are One, are all parts of the great process of existence, a process that is divine.

We too are part of it, and may be instrumental in building up new life out of the old, of cherishing when cherishing is right and of transforming all that is useless in us with the idea that God may find His expression in ever more beautiful and perfect forms.

"Thou art the Creator, Thou art the Preserver, Thou art the Transformer, the Great Lord! Thou comest in the form of Divine Mother; yet Thou art above all attributes, endless and eternal!" so runs the prayer. Unto that One we bow down; unto that One we offer our lives and go forward without fear, knowing we cannot go by any path that does not lead to the Divine, or suffer any experience that does not come to us from those hands—that nowhere can we turn, north, south, east or west, that we do not face the Eternal.

Let this be more than words. Let this become so integrated with our life that no fear can overwhelm us. Then we shall be like Giordano Bruno, who, when he was facing death, said to those who would destroy him: "Your fear is far greater than mine." That can be true for us all; but not until we feel the Divine Presence moving in us and through us, in whatever aspect it may come, can we know

with supreme certainty that there is no death, there is no birth; there is only Reality, and we are That forever and forever and forever!

IN THE NAME OF MY PEOPLE

By Nipo Tahoche-Num Strongheart

(Continued from the Winter Issue)

(The following interview supplements the recording of Chief Strongheart's Address, given at the Ananda Ashrama and printed in the last issue of the "Message", which was interrupted by the breaking of the recording wire.)

THE INTERVIEW

Sister Daya: Chief Strongheart, how accurate is the average white man's appraisement of Indian life and character?

Strongheart: The impression of the average white man is that an Indian — well, he just looks around for a bird or an animal, and that is all that life means to him. Very few people really know the depth of intelligence of the Indian race as a people at large.

Sister Daya: Tell me a little about the position of woman among your people. Was she a beast of burden, as people say, or did she have a dignified and a free place in your community?

Strongheart: I am very glad you asked this question as I hope it may help to clarify the subject in the minds of a great many who seem to labor under the impression that the Indian man was more or less of a master and disregarded women. Among our people we have the highest regard, or let me say esteem, for womanhood as motherhood. We refer to earth as "Mother Earth," because earth is a life-giving power. She conceives from the sun and provides all life and all nourishment for all her children. We do not put woman in the same category, but we compare her to earth; and because we have this so high regard for motherhood, the wo-

man is looked upon not merely as the opposite of man, or as just woman, but as an entity with the same life-giving power as that which God gave to earth. And not only from that standpoint is she held in high regard, but even in our tribal councils she is consulted. She is the mother of man and, in many instances, she is looked upon as far greater than man. She is, you might say, possessed with greater spiritual intelligence. Man may be more advanced in — oh, some of the mechanical things as of today. In old times, among the Indian people, a man might have been a great hunter, he might have been a great warrior, and all that — such things didn't belong to woman — but the woman was the spiritual manifestation, the invisible power. So we always consult woman for guidance and the help of her intelligence.

Sister Daya: How about marriage? How was that adjusted? Does an Indian woman give up everything when she marries?

Strongheart: Oh, no! When white woman marries she forfeits her own individuality, her own name, and assumes the name of her husband. The Indian woman never loses her identity. She retains her former name and, as a matter of fact, the man when he marries becomes a part of the woman, not the woman a part of the man. He becomes a member of his wife's tribe, not she of his; and children born from that marriage belong to the woman, and to her clan, because they are conceived in the woman, developed in the woman, born from the mother. So the children are hers. That is her status.

Sister Daya: You said the other night that no Indian can marry within his own tribe. Will you tell us something about that?

Strongheart: Perhaps I didn't say it right. A man may marry in his own tribe, yes, but he cannot marry in the same

clan. You see the tribe is divided into different clans, and members, men and women, of the same clan, must not marry. That is a law, and the reason of that law is to prevent incestuous marriage. When the blood is too closely related the children often are born blind or crippled or partly insane. Of recent years the white man has made laws to prevent marriages between relatives, like brother and sister or first cousins; but among Indian people who are of the same clan, no matter how remote the relationship may be, they cannot marry. That is why we have never had insane people; we have never had children born blind or crippled or deficient in one way or another.

Sister Daya: Tell us more of the laws of your tribe in relation to men, and how these laws helped to preserve the purity of race and blood.

Strongheart: I will tell you about that by first explaining our head-dress. The eagle feathers in the head-dress are to us the crowning glory. You people reward a brave and honorable man with war-ribbons or medals or certificates or citations of some sort; but our people did not make medals, did not make ribbons, or parchments or documents or citations or diplomas, we awarded our brave and honorable man with feathers of the brave and honorable — the eagle. The eagle is considered among all Indian people, the most brave, the most courageous (even though the most warlike) and the most honorable bird of all the birds. And, as a matter of fact, even white people acknowledge that. You find United States Government and many other governments, as far back as Caesar, using the eagle as a national emblem to represent the strength and integrity of the nation. The eagle feather to us represents the strength and the integrity of the individual.

So we had a law that a man, before he is allowed to marry,

during his courtship, must acquire honorably three eagle feathers, one to be decorated with the red plume to denote his courage and bravery, so that he would be a fit man to provide for his home and protect it against enemy — man, bird or beast. Then he had to have an eagle feather decorated with yellow plumes. Yellow represents intelligence, reasoning power, life or wisdom. One who has that kind of a feather, well, it shows that that man is not apt to be quarrelsome, is bound to reason with his wife and children and with all whom he might contact. He would see the other person's viewpoint as well as his own. He would be a man of intelligence and therefore a fit person to be a husband and a parent — to teach his children and to share his ideas and ideals with his mate.

But the man, above all else, had to have a white plume attached to the eagle feather. That was not so much for the comfort and pleasure of the man and his wife as for the good and development of the children. The white plume denotes chastity on the part of the man. We did not have the double standard of morality among our people. There was the single standard: the same law for the man as for the woman. Just as a man expects chastity and virtue in a woman, so the woman has equal right to expect that from the man. This is a natural law. That is why a man must have these three feathers, but the white plume is the most important of all. For this reason, even if a man lacks the red and yellow feathers, if he has the white, he can marry; but if he lacks the white, even if he has the red and yellow, marriage cannot take place. When a man has been awarded these feathers in council, it shows that he is a fit person to marry, that he is clean of body, clean of mind, clean of spirit, that it will not be with his children, as the Bible says: "The sins of the parents shall be visited upon the children."

Sister Daya: After all, not every man can be a warrior or a councillor.

Strongheart: That is true. You could not expect that any more than you could expect every man to be a doctor or a lawyer. Each man in the tribe had certain responsibilities; some were braves, some were warriors, some were hunters, others were arrow-makers or councilmen, while still others were doctors, like the medicine man or the religious leader. So the red feather that showed that a man was courageous, was the least important; the yellow feather was more important because it represented intelligence, judgment, discretion; but the white plume was the most important because it had to do with the spiritual man.

Sister Daya: What was the mother's relation to her children? How did she train them?

Strongheart: Indian women began to teach their children prior to their birth. Pre-natal teaching existed among Indian women centuries ago. A woman, directly after conception, or when she definitely knew that she was to be a mother, would frequently seclude herself, shut herself away from her people, so that there wouldn't be any other human influence whatsoever. She would go off into some hidden place and perhaps fast for two or three days, and during that fasting her body was relieved of all material waste. She was of a clean body. During that fasting, too, she became more susceptible to spiritual guidance, was enabled to hear, to feel, and to see. While she was there alone she would sing what you might call a spirit-song, a medicine song, a prayer—that is what it was, a prayer, full of whatever hopes there might be in her heart for her unborn child. White mother might have hopes for her child, that it might grow up, if it were a son, to be a great business man or a great teacher. Well, the Indian mother, prior to the child's birth, would instil

into the unborn her hopes for its future; if a girl, that it might be a great mother or a great leader — an inspiration to her people; if a boy, that he might be a mighty warrior, a chief, or a great medicine man. This prayer repeated continually while in seclusion and while fasting, would, so the Indians believe, actually create a spirit in that little body and thus fill it right from the start with the soul of godliness.

Sister Daya: Is the Indian mother a strict disciplinarian?

Strongheart: Oh, no! Indian people never dictate to a child. We never tell a child: "You must do this!" or "You must not do that!" We never punish a child. Never was it known among our people for a mother to punish a child as I have seen white mothers do, as, for instance, making a child go to bed without its supper. We never inflict physical punishment. Rather we teach the child from early infancy about life and about itself. That is why an Indian mother, rather than dictate to a child her own ideas and views, allows him to learn from observation. She suspends him from a branch of a tree where he can learn the life of the birds, of the insect world, of everything about him — elements, clouds in the sky, lightning or thunder. He sees and hears them. He hears and sees all the trees and feels the breezes that come through them. Speaking of the breeze that comes through the trees, it does not mean to us just the wind blowing; we believe that soft breeze, or even the wind, is some unknown, invisible spirit that comes to us. These breezes are for us the spirits of good people in the spirit world. They come and they sing to the child; they sway him from side to side — north to south, east to west, and we feel that by swaying that way, the child observes the influence of the cardinal points. These spirit people sing to the child, instil in its mind and soul the songs of the people beyond — not physical people, the spirit people.

The mother also carries the child on her back in a cradle. In this way the child is afforded the opportunity of observing very carefully everything that passes. White mother carries the child in her arms. This may be done in a selfish spirit or it may be because of her love for the child, her desire to look upon it, but it deprives the child of being aware of anything but its mother. An Indian child feels the presence of its mother; it is a part of her; yet it is afforded every opportunity of learning to see with its own naked eye day by day, many views and visions which become impressed on the mind of the child as a definite picture. Later, when the child grows up, father, mother, or grandparents, may explain why things are and how they learned them when they were little children. The child, being already possessed with the picture, through visual education, is ready to combine that picture with the explanations. In this way it has a complete understanding, both through the ear and through the eye. I claim for my people that visual education is of Indian origin. We practised it centuries ago and still do it to this day, although the white man claims credit for it. That is the way we teach our children, not by dictation, not by force. The child has a soul of its own, a mind of its own, a body of its own, created by the same power that created us, and it has the right to learn in its own way.

(To be concluded)

I do not prefer one religion or philosophy to another. I have no sympathy with the bigotry and ignorance which make transient and partial and puerile distinctions between one man's faith or form of faith and an other's—as Christian and heathen. I pray to be delivered from narrowness, partiality, exaggeration, bigotry. To the philosopher all sects, all nations, are alike. I like Brahma, Hari, Buddha, the Great Spirit, as well as God. —*Thoreau.*

FROM A DISCIPLE'S NOTEBOOK

(Continued from the Winter Issue)

On the evening of Monday, May 22, 1922, the Swami in his yellow robe sat, half reclining, on a chaise longue in the Sun-parlor of the Vedanta Centre of Boston. Grouped around the room were various members of the community. Dinner was over, the week-end with its many activities was over, and winter with its unrelenting cold was over. Every soft breath of air blowing in through the open window brought the awareness of spring, and all combined to mark this hour as an hour of relaxation—an hour for play, not work; for a light touch, not for philosophic discussion or heavy thinking.

The Swami, from where he sat, could look out of the many windows to the stars above and to the Fenway Park below, bordered by the twinkling lights of Boston.

There was, as always on these occasions, a feeling of happy expectancy. One could not help being expectant in the Swami's presence, for he brought livingness with him, a sense of sparkle and glow, as of a fresh flow of being from the heart of Being. Nothing would remain dull or heavy for long in his company.

On this particular evening, he was in a noticeably child-like mood—dreamy, smiling, responsive— yet with a hint of mischief in his eyes. There were calls for a story. What follows is taken from the Notebook:

"A——: 'Tell us about Sri Krishna, Swamiji.'

"Swami: (in a funny little voice) 'All about the little boy, Krishna, out in the fields with the buttercups, and all the little Gopis who came running with their butter and honey. And one day they scared a little rabbit, and he climbed a tree and frightened away a little bird from the bough, and the bird flew off without the bough and the

bough felt lonely. It had beautiful fresh green leaves on its limbs, and so the rabbit went out and began to nibble the leaves that grew on the ends, and it nibbled and squibbled; and a beautiful green butterfly came from the leaves; but when the rabbit was about to eat it, it burst out of its cocoon and became a living butterfly. When the rabbit saw how near he had come to eating a live creature, he became a complete vegetarian and climbed down the tree, putting his paws very carefully.

" 'At the foot of the tree he met a frog and the frog said to him that he would show him a great wonder, that near a stone was a great Yogi who did not breathe or eat or sleep. So the frog led the way, and pretty soon they heard the Yogi chanting. The rabbit came and put his paws on the stone (like this) in an attitude of holy humility, and listened to the Yogi, and the Yogi taught the rabbit all about sacred things, till the rabbit grew calm and quiet, and very pious, and did not jump around any more the way he used to.

" 'One day he saw a hunter, and the hunter was so surprised to see a rabbit so quiet, not hopping around the way rabbits generally do, that he forgot to hunt. So the rabbit told him about the great Yogi, and they formed into a procession with the frog going first, for he was the first one to tell about the Yogi. And they all went to the Yogi and he taught them and they learned all about universal love and lived together after that in concord and unity.'

"Swami called for criticisms of the story and in the conversation that followed, questions were asked of him which drew out reminiscences of his child life. The disciple asked how far back he could remember. Swami measured about two inches with his hand and then made a creeping motion. He really couldn't say. He thought he remembered when he was only able to creep.

"Was he ever punished?

"Yes, he supposed so; maybe he was spanked. He didn't think that he was punished much when he was little, not till he got older.

" 'And then,' someone said, 'you punished *them* by going without eating?'

" 'Yes, sometimes I would come home in a great hurry to get my meal, so I could go back to some sport, and the ladies of the household would keep me waiting. They did it on purpose, and I would lie down on the floor and kick my heels, and they would smile and then pretty soon bring the things!'

"When asked about his love for stories, Swami said that he adored having stories told him, that he always had a story before going to sleep at night. His father told them to him. He used to lie close up against him and would listen to them till he fell asleep, and then he would be carried off to bed. His father was an old man, nearly seventy, with long white beard, and he loved to hold Swami close to him. Swami would lie there in his father's arms and play with his beard while he told the stories.

" 'What were the stories? Oh, all sorts. India has many stories. I remember there was one I used to like about a man who stole fish and ate them and hid the bones in his beard. He was left in charge of these fish and no one knew what had happened to them till they found all those bones in his beard.

" 'Then there was a story about some fish in a pool, and they were afraid that the water was drying up. An old crane heard them and said that he knew of a beautiful lake that never dried up, and as they could never get there by themselves, he would carry them there in his beak. So they came up, one by one, and he took them in his beak, but he didn't carry them to the lake, he smashed them against the

rock and ate them. You see he was so old, he could not catch them in any other way.

" 'Finally a crab came to the surface and said that as it was difficult for the crane to carry him, he would catch hold of the crane. So he held on to the crane's neck. Soon they came to a pile of fish-bones; but when the crane tried to get hold of him, he pinched his neck till the crane, frightened, said he would carry him to the water. So he flew till he got to the lake, and then the crab pinched his throat till he died. This was told as an illustration of the result of greed.'

"The disciple mentioned to the Swami that in Tagore's reminiscences he speaks of how little he saw of his family, and how he was left almost entirely to the care of the servants. The Swami said that the Tagores, being members of the Brahmo Samaj, had tried to follow Western customs, that it was the servants who generally did the punishing.

"The Disciple: 'How were you punished?'

"Swami: 'I was generally spanked, as far as I can recall. There was an old woman who loved us all and spoiled every one of us. She would save up her money to buy us little things. She would buy me kites. I was simply crazy about flying kites and got new kites whenever I could. Then there was another old servant. I have told you about him. He had a boat and he used to cook little sweetmeats and rice dishes for me and bring me little eggs and other curios.'

"Sister Satya Prana asked the Swami what pet names the old woman had for him. Swami said that it was too long ago to remember, and anyway he wasn't going to tell all of us that. Then he spoke of his father again, how tall and deep-chested he was, with what beautiful wavy white hair and flowing beard.

"Sister Seva remarked on how late in life he must have married to have had such a young child as Swamiji when he

was so along in years. Said Swami: 'You see, it was a second marriage.'

"Swami then threw himself back on the couch and looked up at a star. 'O, lovely star,' he crooned, 'shine down on all the world, on people's hearts, and take away all gloom and darkness; for they need your light, shining and beaming!'

"I cannot recall exactly what he said; but it was very lovely—a precious evening—and Swami was rarely spontaneous and full of spiritual light. There is only a dull echo of it all in these poorly remembered words."

I saw one put a hollow reed to his lips. It was a forlorn, sweet air that he played, an ancient forgotten strain learned of a shepherding woman upon the hills. The Song of Songs it was that he played: and the beating of hearts was heard, and I heard sighs, and a voice like a distant bird-song rose and fell.

"Play me a song of Death," I said. Then he who had the hollow reed at his lips smiled, and he played again the Song of Songs. —*Fiona Macleod.*

BOOK REVIEW

WORLD FAITH *by Ruth Cranston. Pub. by Harper & Brothers, New York.* 193 *pp. Price* $3.00.

Here in one small, compact volume, easy to hold in the hand, we have a most comprehensive account of the "religions of the United Nations," which is to say, the basic religions of the world. These are taken up, chapter by chapter, one chapter to each religion, beginning with "The Blessed Way of Lord Krishna and the Hindus" and terminating with "The Religion of the Human Family," which

Mrs. Cranston sees as a synthesis of the great principles common to all faiths.

Because of its accuracy, lucidity and simplicity of presentation, this book should prove of inestimable value not only to those who seek for social and political unity in "One World," but also to those who are striving to walk the spiritual path.

Without a sympathetic understanding of one another's religion, men can never achieve true brotherhood, for religion constitutes the heart beat of each race. Therefore, in helping to clear away the mists of prejudice and ignorance which obscure these matters, Mrs. Cranston has made a very real contribution to world peace.

REPORT

THE VEDANTA CENTRE, BOSTON, MASS.

Beginning from the New Year, when the first Service of 1950 was conducted in the hush of midnight, until the present time, the Work at the Vedanta Centre has moved in steady rhythm. There is nothing new to report except seasonal Festivals which never fail to bring additional stimulus and inspiration.

Swami Vivekananda's birthday led the celebrations, observed first privately by the Centre's resident community on January 10th and again with Public Services on the following Sunday the 15th.

The Forty-first Anniversary of the establishment of the Vedanta Centre was a happy event. It attracted a large gathering of friends to the Hindu Banquet on the evening of Friday the 13th. Following the dinner, Mr. Einar Hansen of the Boston Symphony presented a program of choice selections on his violin. Reverend Donald Lothrop, minister of Boston's Community Church, the guest speaker, gave an interesting address on "Equality of Faiths." Srimati

Gayatri Devi also spoke expressing appreciation for the unfailing support given to the Centre year after year by its many friends and followers.

Sunday, January 29th, was chosen in remembrance of Swami Paramananda's Birthday. A special Service was held in the afternoon, during which Sri Charuprava Devi of India, Miss Lois Houghton, Mr. Raphael Boruchoff and Mr. William Ennis, all took part. Afterwards the large group gathered together in order to share the tea and many delicacies prepared by several devoted members of the congregation.

The great Master Sri Ramakrishna was remembered on his Birthday, which this year fell on the 18th of February. A Hindu banquet given on the previous evening brought together many devotees. Professor Theresa Muller of Boston University spoke on "Roads to Reality," touching upon religion and psychiatry as related to each other. Many questions were asked of the guest speaker on the latter subject which made the discussion extremely interesting. On Sunday, the 19th, the celebration reached its culmination when Srimati Gayatri Devi conducted two Services on the life and teaching of Sri Ramakrishna, before full attendances.

During the past months an increasing interest in the Centre's regular Services and Classes has been shown by the students of the city's various educational institutions. Frequently young men and women from Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston University visit the Library. On several occasions large groups from Wheelock School have been among the audiences. On February 26th, Stoneham Congregational Church sent its young people's society to attend the Sunday evening Service.

Srimati Gayatri Devi left Boston on the 27th for her yearly visit to the Ananda Ashrama in La Crescenta, California,

halting in Rochester, New York, where she delivered a lecture on "Vedanta and the West" before a select group interested in Vedanta. The meeting aroused great enthusiasm and lasted for nearly two hours during which Srimati Gayatri Devi answered various questions on India in general. It is hoped that her visit can be repeated in the near future.

California greeted Srimati Gayatri Devi with the bluest sky and warmest sunshine. She will conduct all Services and Classes at Ananda Ashrama until after Easter, when Sister Daya, now in charge of the Boston Centre, will resume her post in the West.

ANANDA ASHRAMA, CALIFORNIA

At Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, the fall of 1949 was marked by the annual Christmas Bazaar which, owing to the labor and enthusiasm of Ashrama devotees, proved eminently successful both from the social and financial point of view. The season also was marked by the usual rhythm of Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve Services which in their spirit and setting paralleled similar Services of former years. Lights, flowers and music gave their ever new beauty, while the sincere expression of devotion flowed as always from a fresh and unfailing source. Faithful friends of the Ashrama gathered in the Temple of the Universal Spirit on each of these occasions, forming with the members of the Community, a vital centre of meditation and prayer to carry forward into 1950 the faith and vision which are the Ashrama's precious heritage.

The New Year 1950 ushered in the season of holy birthday anniversaries with the joint celebration of Swami Vivekananda's and Swami Paramananda's birthday, which was held on Sunday, January 15th. Although Swami Paramananda's actual birthday fell somewhat later than this, it seemed fitting that the great Master and his disciple should

be joined in the thought of those who came to pay their homage.

Sri Ramakrishna's natal day fell this year, according to the lunar calendar, on Saturday, February 18th, and was observed publicly on Sunday, February 19th. The Ashrama was privileged to have as guest speaker for the afternoon Service its old-time friend, Mr. David Villasenor. Two weeks before, accompanied by his gifted wife he had paid an overnight visit to the Ashrama and had generously shared with the community the fruit of his creative effort along the line of "nature printing" and the preservation of the wonderful Indian sand-paintings which formerly were destined very literally to go with the wind. "David" has made it possible to hang them on the wall and thus preserve a very rare native art for posterity. It was felt that the public should have the opportunity to see samples of these sand-paintings and hear "David's" account of his work. Hence the return visit which happily coincided with Sri Ramakrishna's day. It is hoped that in a future issue of the "Message of the East" we shall be able to print the recording of David's words on this occasion, describing the mysterious allure which the sands of the desert had for him.

On Saturday, March 4th, Srimati Gayatri Devi arrived at the California Ashrama accompanied by her mother, Sri Charuprava Devi, who has come to America on a pilgrimage to the Vedanta Centres established by Swami Paramananda whom she knew from his childhood on. Members both in the east and west feel greatly blessed to have this noble and devoted lady in their midst and pray that she may be able to stay on with them for a far longer time than the Government normally allows.

On March 8th, Sister Daya left for Boston, where she will remain till after Easter.